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On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3509

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow citizens, we gather here today to discuss the future of our democracy and the way we elect our representatives. Since the inception of our nation, nearly a quarter of a millennia ago, our ancestors have fought to establish a nation founded on the principles of liberty, equality, and justice. We too must strive to perfect our electoral system, ensuring that every voice is heard and every vote counts.

Throughout these many years, our predecessors embarked on a journey to improve our democratic process, a journey that has brought us to this moment in history. Today, we stand at the threshold of a new era of electoral reform, and as we move forward, it is crucial that we carefully consider the implications of the voting systems we choose to adopt.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) has been proposed as a solution to some of the issues we face in our current electoral system. However, while RCV offers some improvements, it also brings its own set of limitations and complexities. The method can lead to strategic voting, a practice where voters do not express their true preferences but rather vote in a manner that they believe will maximize the chances of their preferred outcome. This can result in distorted election results, as the outcome may not accurately reflect the true desires of the electorate. Furthermore, strategic voting undermines the very principles of democracy, as it discourages voters from genuinely supporting their preferred candidates. RCV can also be challenging for voters to understand, which could hinder participation and engagement in the electoral process.

Under our current system, our votes are always counted, even if they won't affect the outcome. However, under RCV, many votes are unable to transfer to the deciding round due to the order of elimination, even if they could have made a difference. RCV has been plagued with issues and false promises. When RCV fails to deliver on its promises, it causes resentment and backlash from voters. Oregon should not adopt a system that wastes votes and disenfranchises voters, especially when there is a better alternative available. It's important that we take the decision of which voting method to use seriously and ensure we select a proposal that stands up to scrutiny and delivers on its promises.

As Oregonians, we are in a unique position to spearhead this issue. There is an active ballot initiative, IP-11, for an alternative voting method, STAR Voting, that is currently collecting signatures. We must not undermine the efforts of voters across

the state to decide what voting method they would like to use. STAR Voting was invented here in Oregon, and it better delivers on the goals of RCV while still complying with all of our current election security measures, local tabulation, and auditing protocols. Under STAR Voting, your full vote automatically goes to the finalist you prefer, so your vote is always fully counted and always makes a difference. STAR strives to empower voters, eliminate strategic voting, and provide a more straightforward method for expressing preferences.

As we navigate this critical period of electoral reform, it is our firm belief that the legislature should leave this vital decision up to the people, giving them the opportunity to choose the best voting system for their needs. Our citizens deserve the right to participate in shaping the future of our democracy. Together we can work to champion the cause of electoral reform and build a brighter, more inclusive, and more equitable future for our great nation and the generations that follow and create a government that is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

In conclusion, let us not settle for a flawed and outdated reform like Ranked Choice Voting. Instead, let us work together to ensure that our electoral system is one that reflects the true will of the people, encourages genuine support for preferred candidates, and guarantees that every vote counts.